

**To:** fpe7@cdc.gov[fpe7@cdc.gov]  
**From:** AboveTheFold  
**Sent:** Sun 8/16/2015 12:47:26 PM  
**Subject:** EHN's Weekend Reader: China chemical blast; Low oil prices threaten fracking; Your oil rig vacation!!

Week of Sunday, August 16, 2015

## **Weekend Environment Reader**

### **Top News**

#### **Death toll at 112 from Tianjin blasts, sodium cyanide located.**

Ten more bodies were found on Saturday night, pushing the death toll from the massive warehouse explosions in North China's Tianjin city to 112 by 9 am on Sunday. Of the bodies, 24 have been identified and 88 others will need DNA testing. China Daily Aug 16

#### **Vacation in Rome? Or on that oil rig?**

In the next several years, thousands of offshore oil and gas drilling rigs, many of

them built during a global construction boom in the 1970s and '80s, will reach retirement age and require decommissioning. Countries will have to decide whether to sink, remove or repurpose them. New York Times Aug 16

**Low oil prices pose threat to Texas fracking bonanza.**

No place in Texas produces more oil than Karnes County, but suddenly the roaring economy here is cooling fast, chilled by the plunging price of crude. New York Times Aug 16

**EPA Chief: 'Holding ourselves to a higher standard.'**

NPR's Scott Simon asks EPA administrator Gina McCarthy about the toxins released into a Colorado river this week by an EPA contractor working on a shuttered gold mine. Weekend Edition, NPR. Aug 16

## **Navajo Nation 'weeping' as toxic mining spill flows through reservation.**

Just days after a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) crew accidentally released more than three million gallons of mustard-colored wastewater into a tributary of the Animas River, Navajo President Russell Begaye stood on the unstable ground at the site of the breach. Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/nation-weeping-toxic-mining-spill-flows-through-reservation-161395> Indian Country Today Media Network Aug 16

## **The next drought: Water officials endorse a 'less is more' strategy for the future.**

Glimpses of California's water future: A sprawl of sewage treatment plants, recharge basins and desalination facilities, stretching out across an industrial backlot near Rancho Cucamonga. Los Angeles

Times Aug 16

**Firefighters struggle to contain blazes as Soda Fire becomes largest in US.**

Winds helped stoke wildfires sweeping across the northern Rocky mountains, the Pacific northwest and elsewhere on Saturday, posing new problems for firefighters trying to contain flames that have been fed by drought. Associated Press Aug 16

**The Mix**

**VIDEO: Moscow River catches fire after pipeline bursts.**

Amateur footage shows a large oil fire on the surface of the Moscow river after an underwater pipeline reportedly burst on Wednesday. The Moscow oil refinery, owned by Gazprom Neft, told Reuters it was unaffected by the fire, and did not own the pipeline where the incident

occurred. The Guardian Aug 15

**Pope sets up yearly Catholic Church day of care for environment.**

Pope Francis, riding a wave of mostly positive reaction to his encyclical on ecology, on Monday set up a Catholic "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" to draw attention to the plight of the planet. Reuters Aug 11

Editor comments: IMHO, Since Earth Day (April 22), World Environment Day (June 5), and World Oceans Day (June 8) already exist, consuming another day on the calendar seems like an inefficient consumption of resources. Merger, anyone?-PD

**Republican hopefuls reap \$62m in support from donors with fossil fuel ties.**

Republican presidential candidates have banked millions of dollars in donations

from a small number of mega-rich individuals and corporations with close ties to the fossil fuel industries that stand to lose the most from the fight against climate change. The Guardian Aug 12

**Renowned US wildlife biologist dies.**

A biologist internationally known for his research on how toxic chemicals affect the sex habits of alligators and crocodiles has died. Gainesville Sun, Florida. Aug 11

**The toxic Colorado river spill and the menace of old hard-rock mines.**

Keena Kimmel's bookshop occupies a cozy curve along the Animas River, a place of wild sunflowers and lilacs. But this weekend the river was empty and Kimmel's heart broken. Los Angeles Times Aug 11

**What to do with 264 billion pounds of coal ash in North Carolina.**

UNC-Charlotte engineers are developing

**What Changed The World This Week** but time is running short. North Carolina Health News, North Carolina. Aug 10

**Study links polluted air in China to 1.6 million deaths a year.**

Outdoor air pollution contributes to the deaths of an estimated 1.6 million people in China every year, or about 4,400 people a day, according to a newly released scientific paper. New York Times Aug 15

Editor comments: The numbers here are appalling -- over 4,000 pollution-related deaths per day. Note that the study has yet to be published, though.-PD

**Lead contamination found at up to 10,000 southeast L.A. County homes.**

Soil testing has found that lead contamination from a Vernon battery recycling plant extends over a much

larger area than previously estimated, possibly reaching as many as 10,000 homes in southeast Los Angeles County, state environmental officials said Friday. Los Angeles Times Aug 15

### **DuPont and the chemistry of deception.**

For years while working for Dupont, Ken Wamsley measured levels of a chemical called C8 in various products. At the time, he wasn't particularly concerned about the stuff. Now he is suffering. The Intercept Aug 13

### **Will El Niño 2015 rival the strongest year on record?**

If you don't know El Niño now, you will soon. The waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean are heating up, scientists say, building towards a strong El Niño. CNN Aug 15



## **China blast zone evacuated over chemical contamination fears.**

New small explosions rocked a disaster zone in the Chinese port of Tianjin on Saturday, as authorities pulled out an additional survivor and began evacuating the area to clean up chemical contamination. Associated Press Aug 15

## **National Black Chamber of Commerce, solar energy critic, rakes in cash from polluters.**

The National Black Chamber of Commerce, a leading critic of efforts to expand solar energy production in Florida and nationwide, is funded primarily by fossil fuel energy companies, including Koch Industries and ExxonMobil. Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, Florida. Aug 15

## **Environmentalism's racist history.**

For these conservationists, who prized

the expert governance of resources, it was an unsettlingly short step from managing forests to managing the human gene pool. New Yorker Aug 15

**What eating 40 teaspoons a day of sugar can do to you.**

Soda has been a major target in the debate over sugar and its role in the obesity crisis. But high levels of added sugars can be found in many seemingly healthful foods, from yogurts to energy bars and even whole-grain bread. New York Times Aug 15

**Coal's devastation.**

Scholars may never understand the energy source's full economic cost, but that doesn't make its damage any less knowable. The Atlantic Aug 14

**Environmentalists, coal operators at odds over proposed science-based mining rules.**

Pittsburgh will be the host of one of six public hearings next month on a long-awaited and contentious proposed federal rule designed to better protect streams from the impacts of surface and underground coal mining. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pennsylvania. Aug 16

**Humans may face malnutrition if birds and bees disappear.**

If all the birds, bugs, bees and other creatures that pollinate our food crops were to disappear from the planet, humans could face a sharp increase in malnutrition, disease and death in many parts of the world, scientists estimate.

Reuters Health Aug 14

**Data show widespread mining impacts in Colorado.**

Coloradohealth officials Thursday released a map that shows water-quality impacts to 1,645 miles of streams, possibly caused by mining activities.

Durango Herald, Colorado. Aug 15

**Fiorina, Cruz and Walker respond to Jerry Brown on climate change.**

California Gov. Jerry Brown, blaming climate change for hot weather that has exacerbated the state's historic drought, has pressed Republican presidential candidates in recent weeks to address the issue in their campaigns, first scolding them in a letter and then telling reporters, "My message is real clear: California's burning. What the hell are you going to do about it?" On Saturday, a rejoinder.

Sacramento Bee, California. Aug 16

**The drought's hard lesson: 'When water is life.'**

The lake where Robert and Sarah Godfrey were fishing wasn't one of the pretty ones. Los Angeles Times Aug 14

**Rescuing wildlife is futile, and necessary.**

Saving wild animals — even just one —

can be a way of pushing back against the harm that humans cause to the natural world. New York Times Aug 14

**Compared to Colorado spill,  
Pennsylvania mine drainage extensive.**

In western Colorado, a discharge of millions of gallons of yellow-orange drainage from an abandoned mine is cause for an emergency. Here in the former coal fields of Northeast Pennsylvania, it's just another day. Scranton Times-Tribune, Pennsylvania. Aug 14

**How catching big waves helped turn  
this pro surfer into a conservationist.**

Ramon Navarro came to the sea as the son of a fisherman, found his own place on it as a pro-surfer, and now fights to protect the coastline he loves. Grist Aug 14

**Blue-green algae a growing threat to  
US drinking water supply, study finds.**

Unchecked blooms of cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, in rivers, lakes and reservoirs pose a growing health risk to animals and possibly humans, according to researchers in a new analysis of waterways in the United States. United Press International Aug 14

**Shipping oil through pipelines safer than by rail, report says.**

Transporting oil and gas by rail is more dangerous than moving it by pipeline, a new study has found. Globe and Mail, Ontario. Aug 13

**'They figured our neighborhood is black, so they'll do it.'**

~~Opinions~~ of Southside Syracuse put up a fierce, well-organized fight to stop construction of a sewage plant and still lost. Center for Public Integrity Aug 13

**How the universe began and how humanity will drown: A scientist's to-do list.**

No pressure, scientists, but you just got your marching orders for the next 10 years, and, well, you've got your work cut out for you. Grist Aug 16

### **President Obama's eleventh-hour conservation efforts.**

Shortly before leaving town for the summer, Congress approved – and President Obama happily signed into law – three bills that, taken together, will preserve as permanent wilderness roughly 275,000 acres of spectacular mountain terrain in Idaho known as Boulder-White Clouds. New York Times Aug 15

Editor comments: If you've read a New York Times editorial on the environment in the past couple of decades, it was probably written by the Pulitzer-winning Bob Semple.

### **The closing of the Canadian mind.**

Mr. Harper's war against science has been even more damaging to the capacity of Canadians to know what their government is doing. The prime minister's base of support is Alberta, a western province financially dependent on the oil industry, and he has been dedicated to protecting petrochemical companies from having their feelings hurt by any inconvenient research. New York Times Aug 15

Editor comments: This harsh critique of Canadian Prime Minister Harper focuses largely on the Keystone XL pipeline and his "war on science."-PD

**BP's biggest defenders at Fox News now comparing EPA spill to Deepwater Horizon disaster.**

Fox host Steve Doocy and senior judicial analyst Andrew Napolitano equated the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)



accidental spill of toxic water into the Animas River in Colorado while attempting to treat pollution from an abandoned gold mine, to the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez oil spills. Media Matters Aug 15

Editor comments: EPA's harshest critics are suddenly interested in mine waste spills, now that EPA's to blame for one of them. Riparian Benghazi.-PD

### **The Oyster War: A parallel universe.**

The book "The Oyster War" by Summer Brennan aspires to tell the definitive account of what transpired in the battle over an oyster farm on Point Reyes, California, but offers readers a biased, inaccurate, and incomplete picture of that battle. Huffington Post Aug 14

### **How California is winning the drought.**

For California, there hasn't ever been a summer quite like the summer of 2015.

The state and its 39 million residents are about to enter the fifth year of a drought. It has been the driest four-year period in California history -- and the hottest, too. New York Times Aug 15

**Before an animal disease becomes a human epidemic.**

Most animal-health research focuses on infections that have already made the leap to people. A veterinary scientist explains why that may be bad for public health. The Atlantic Aug 14

**Editorials**

**Old mines are ongoing disaster.**

It would be shortsighted if the accidental release of toxic mine waste in Colorado goes no further than another round of bashing the Environmental Protection Agency. Lincoln Journal Star, Nebraska. Aug 16

### **Another Olympic mess.**

The only thing smellier than the Rio de Janeiro lake that sickened rowers preparing for next year's summer Olympics is the process by which the lords of the International Olympic Committee allowed this to happen.

Boston Herald, Massachusetts. Aug 15

Editor comments: Boston recently abandoned its 2024 Olympic bid. Maybe this is a little gloating over Rio's pollution problems.-PD

### **States must keep EPA in check.**

Western governors and attorneys general should demand a multifaceted, independent investigation of the EPA's involvement in the Animas River spill.

Colorado Springs Gazette, Colorado. Aug 13

### **Good news for bees is good for us, too.**

It may not come naturally, but root for the bee. The little creatures' stingers pack a wallop but our everyday lives would face a far, far greater pain without their work. Springfield Republican, Massachusetts.

Aug 11

**New Mexico gets another mess, and sound bites, from DC.**

Unfortunately New Mexico has become well schooled in being patient as the federal government comes up with cleanup plans. Albuquerque Journal, New Mexico. Aug 12

**Oregon ready for Obama's Clean Power Plan.**

As a result of steps Oregon lawmakers have already taken, this state is well positioned to comply with the president's Clean Power Plan, if it survives court challenges and is fully implemented. Salem Statesman Journal, Oregon. Aug 15

## For a cleaner environment, let's produce cleaner energy.

Staten Islanders have a huge stake in America's efforts to deal with climate change. We learned our lesson the hard way from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy. Staten Island Advance, New York. Aug 11

What's with the commentary in green?  
Our team of journalists and experts doesn't just aggregate. We put the day's news in context, tapping our knowledge to highlight trends and connect dots.

Who's behind the comments? JPM - Chief scientist Pete Myers; DF - Director Douglas Fischer; BB - Editor Brian Bienkowski; PD - Weekend editor Peter Dykstra; LP - Research manager Laura Pyle; KW - Operations supervisor Kara West.

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Sciences  
421 Park Street, Suite 4  
Charlottesville, VA USA 22902  
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[feedback@EnvironmentalHealthNews.org](mailto:feedback@EnvironmentalHealthNews.org)

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